

VZCZCXRO8200  
PP RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHAS #0740/01 2210713  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
P 090713Z AUG 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7773  
INFO RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY 1003  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY PRIORITY 1944  
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 6781  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3152  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 2799  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7664  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0563

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000740

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2029

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTSAG](#) [AG](#) [ML](#) [MR](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGERIA LINKS RANSOM PAYMENTS TO TRANS-SAHARA  
SECURITY

Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY. Algeria considers the payment of ransom to terrorist organizations a serious problem for security in the Sahel region and will propose an UNGA resolution condemning such payments based on a similar proposal recently acted upon by the African Union (AU). Algeria is not circulating draft language through official diplomatic channels, but MFA Secretary General Bouguerra told the Ambassador August 3 that he believed the US PermRep is aware of the content. The GOA is also raising the issue separately in intelligence channels to garner broad support for the concept. Algeria links the ransom issue to ongoing terrorism and security issues across the trans-Sahara region, arguing that the ability of terrorist groups to move relatively freely and to provide support to localized populations undercuts government efforts at stability and counter-radicalization. Algeria has committed resources to several key development projects in Mali in an attempt to counter terrorist influence. Heads of state from the trans-Sahara region reportedly plan to meet in an effort to boost regional security cooperation, and expert and sub-ministerial meetings have already met to prepare for the summit, which the Algerians hope will occur later this year. END SUMMARY.

UN RESOLUTION AGAINST RANSOMS  
-----

12. (S) MFA Secretary General Madjid Bouguerra told the Ambassador August 3 that Algeria is seeking support for a UNGA resolution condemning the payment of ransoms to terrorist organizations, in line with a proposal put forth at the July African Union (AU) meeting. Bouguerra said the Algerian permanent representative to the UN is encouraged by initial responses to the proposal, which would most likely go through the Sixth Committee. He told the Ambassador that the MFA is not circulating draft language yet in an effort to build support for the general concept first and that he believed the US PermRep is aware of the substance. The Algerians are also following up in security liaison channels, he said, in an effort to maximize support for the idea. Bouguerra claimed that Algeria opted not to introduce the proposal at the July Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit, preferring to move directly from the AU to the UN while consulting with its partners in the fight against terrorism. The Ambassador told Bouguerra that he would pass this information to Washington and New York to help clarify the Algerian effort. Bouguerra thanked the Ambassador and said, "We count on you in the UN regarding this initiative. It is the right thing to do to fight terrorism."

MOVEMENT ON TRANS-SAHARA COOPERATION  
-----

13. (S) Bouguerra also told the Ambassador that combating terrorists is becoming an increasingly high priority for all nations in the region whereas in the past, Algeria was more concerned about this issue than most of its neighbors. Regional counter-terrorism efforts are important, he said, because of the fragility of nations such as Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. "It is necessary for us to join forces and cooperate across the Sahara band," Bouguerra said, including Tunisia and Morocco. In that regard, the secretary general said that Algeria is encouraging its neighbors to follow through on the leadership shown by Malian president Toure, who has sought a new heads of state conference on security cooperation in the region. He said that proposals for a joint resolution have already been exchanged at the expert and ministerial level and that substantial agreement has been reached as to broad concepts of cooperation. Bouguerra said he expected movement on setting a date for the heads of state conference later this year, after a bit more time has passed after the Mauritanian elections.

14. (S) Bouguerra said that the countries of the region differ on means to counter terrorism and admitted that engagement with other nations has not always turned out to the liking of the Algerians. He noted challenges posed by internal issues in each country, saying he recently saw a report from the Mauritanian government that highlighted the need for more effective measures that need to be taken by the Malian government in order to stem the flow of terrorists into northern Mauritania.

ALGIERS 00000740 002 OF 002

15. (S) Hostage taking, Bouguerra said, is an extremely good business in the Sahel, and ransom payments go a long way to pay for equipment, weapons, supplies, and to bribe corrupt officials, essentially giving terrorists free movement across vast territories. The results of this situation force Algeria to mobilize resources toward its southern border and away from other priority areas, he said. The goal of the heads of state conference will be to explore the means to combat this situation. "We did our part through the Algiers Accord," he said, referring to efforts to restore stability in Mali, and noted that it is time for Algeria to work with Niger to avoid a "similar rebellion."

C/T THROUGH DEVELOPMENT  
-----

16. (S) Bouguerra said Algeria has three sets of development projects under way with the Malian government, drilling water, building medical facilities, and other forms of technical training. He said funds have already been obligated and that Algeria hopes other parties with an interest in regional stability will also step forward, not only the US, but also the EU, given its concern about illegal immigration. "We have to do something," he said, stating that poor socio-economic conditions in the area threaten to rekindle rebellion and allow terrorists to gain footholds with the population.

17. (S) COMMENT: Bouguerra and his director general for Africa appeared not to have a clear idea about how much progress had been made on standing up mixed units in northern Mali. But it is clear that Algeria is placing a high priority on its proposals to find an international framework to condemn and ban the payment of ransom to terrorists, and link the practice to destabilization and radicalization of the region. If Bouguerra's assertions are correct regarding Algeria's commitment toward development projects in Mali, it may herald a gradual turn in regional affairs to more concrete cooperation on efforts to address root causes of instability. While past summits have done little to push real progress on multilateral Sahel security, the link Algeria is now trying to make between counter-terrorism and ransom payments, as well as development assistance, may give

the next heads of state meeting a sharper focus.

18. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

PEARCE